

facts. Opinions that have little basis in fact are termed *unfounded*.

**2** Introduce the term *proposition*—a statement that can be argued as true. Provide students with several possible propositions such as the following:

- Today's movies are too violent.
- Drug testing is necessary for all professional athletes.

• Dogs make the best pets.

Divide students into cooperative groups and assign each group the task of generating several arguments that could support one of these propositions. Introduce a blank Proposition/Support Outline on an overhead transparency sheet (see the Appendix for a reproducible version of the Proposition/Support Outline), and model with students how various supports for a

### Proposition/Support Outline for Rain Forests

Proposition: The loss of rain forests will lead to an environmental disaster.

Support:

1. Facts

- Rain forests use carbon dioxide.
- There is increased carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere.
- The rain forests contain many endangered plant and animal species.
- Deforestation leads to widespread soil erosion in many areas.
- The burning of fossil fuels puts carbon dioxide into the environment.

2. Statistics

- The 1990s were the "hottest" decade in the last 100 years.
- One acre of rain forest disappears every second.
- Four million acres (larger than the state of Connecticut) disappear every year.
- Fifty to 100 species are destroyed with each acre of forest cleared.
- If present trends continue, half the rain forests of Honduras and Nicaragua will disappear in the early 21st century.

3. Examples

- India has almost no remaining rain forest.
- Current plans target eliminating much of the Congo's rain forest.
- Run-off from deforestation in Indonesia threatens their coral reefs and diminishes the fish population.
- Cutting of rain forests in Bangladesh and the Philippines has led to killer floods.

4. Expert authority

- Computers predict doubling of carbon dioxide in the 21st century, raising temperatures by 3 to 9 degrees.
- National Center for Atmospheric Research believes increased carbon dioxide will lead to the Greenhouse Effect and global warming.
- Nobel Prize-winner Al Gore calls the Greenhouse Effect our most serious threat ever.

5. Logic and reasoning

- Warmer temperatures will harm crops and increase energy costs.
- More people will starve because of less food and increased population growth.
- The polar glaciers will melt and raise the sea level, flooding coastlines.
- Many species useful to humans will disappear.
- More sections of the world will become uninhabitable deserts due to soil loss, erosion, overgrazing, and overcultivation.

Source: Buehl, D. (1992). Outline helps students analyze credibility of author's premise. *WEAC News & Views*, 28(1), 8.

# Proposition/Support Outline

**Proposition:**

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**Support:**

**1. Facts**

**2. Statistics**

**3. Examples**

**4. Expert authority**

**5. Logic and reasoning**

*Source:* Buehl, D. (1992). Outline helps students analyze credibility of author's premise. *WEAC News & Views*, 28(1), 8.

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